



Education & Skills  
Funding Agency

# **Minimum Standards for 2018 to 2019**

**For all age apprenticeships**

**Includes references to changes in  
Minimum Standards policy for 19+  
education and training**

**June 2019**

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## Introduction and purpose of this document

1. This document sets out the Department's position on all age apprenticeship and 19+ Minimum Standards, as the Department first published in April 2019.
2. It confirms the final Minimum Standards threshold for the 2018 to 2019 hybrid end year for all age apprenticeships and describes how we will apply them for this final year. For more information on the hybrid end year, please refer to the [Apprenticeships QAR technical specification for 2018 to 2019](#).
3. Minimum Standards for 16 to 18 are not covered in this document. Guidance on the 2018 Minimum Standards for 16 to 18 year olds can be found at [16 to 18 Minimum Standards](#).

## Understanding the terminology

4. The terms 'we' and 'ESFA' refer to the 'Education and Skills Funding Agency' and associated staff.
5. The term 'Department' refers to the Department for Education and associated staff.
6. When we refer to 'you' or 'providers', this includes colleges, Higher Education Institutions, training organisations, local authorities and employers that receive funding from us to deliver education and training.

## Changes since the 2017 to 2018 version

7. We will **no longer** apply Minimum Standards to **19+ education and training** from 2018 to 2019 as a trigger for intervention. We may, however, consider Minimum Standards in respect of decisions as to whether to lift existing additional conditions related to failures to comply with Minimum Standards in previous years (for 19+ education and training), or as an indicator of poor or declining education performance. See paragraph 25 onwards for further information.
8. We **will continue** to apply Minimum Standards to apprenticeships in 2018 to 2019 as a trigger for intervention. The position after this is under review. For 2018 to 2019 for apprenticeships is:
  - the threshold remains at 62%.
  - the tolerance level remains at 40%.

## The future policy position

9. The Department published its forward looking intervention policies for colleges and independent training providers on 1 April 2019:

- [College oversight: support and intervention](#)
- [ESFA oversight of Independent Training Providers: operational guidance](#)

10. These documents set out that the Minimum Standards policy had been reviewed and that we would stop taking intervention action on 19+ Minimum Standards under the current policy after the application this year to the 2017 to 2018 data. Instead, we will use all education performance data available to us earlier in our overall risk assessments. Please note paragraph 26 regarding the potential lifting of existing 19+ Minimum Standards additional conditions.

11. It also stated that reformed apprenticeship measures, however, require a more fundamental review as we move from frameworks to standards. It stated that we would apply the current Minimum Standards policy to all aged apprenticeship provision, based on 2018 to 2019 data, for one final year.

12. To understand how the Minimum Standards relate to Qualification Achievement Rates (QAR), read this document together with the following:

- [Business rules for QAR 2018 to 2019](#)
- [Technical specifications for 2018 to 2019](#)

## The apprenticeship thresholds and how we will apply them for 2018 to 2019

13. We will use the overall QAR methodology when calculating apprenticeship Minimum Standards.

14. The thresholds and tolerance levels for apprenticeships will remain the same as in 2017 to 2018.

### The apprenticeship threshold

15. The threshold is the initial stage (of two stages) for calculating whether certain provision falls below Minimum Standards.

16. Minimum Standards thresholds are not a target to achieve, they are the minimum acceptable level of performance.

17. The threshold for apprenticeships are at programme level. For frameworks this is for each framework and framework level combination. For standards this is for each individual standard.

18. The apprenticeship threshold for 2018 to 2019 is 62%.

## **The apprenticeship tolerance level**

19. The apprenticeship tolerance level is the second and final stage for measuring performance against Minimum Standards.

20. If a college or training organisation fails to meet the apprenticeship Minimum Standards through the tolerance level, our approach to intervention will apply. We may also use the results of Minimum Standards to inform business decisions. If we do this, we will specify how as part of those business processes.

21. The apprenticeship tolerance level will remain at 40% in 2018 to 2019. To calculate the tolerance we:

- will calculate how many of the apprenticeships delivered by a provider are below the Minimum Standards threshold; if the QAR for an apprenticeship is below the 62% threshold, we classify that apprenticeship as falling below the Minimum Standard.
- will then calculate if this is more than 40% of the total cohort for apprenticeships, if so the provider will be in scope for intervention.

22. Due to the nature of the Minimum Standards calculation, it is possible to fall below the tolerance level and have an overall QAR above either the national or provider type rates. For example, a provider delivering 100 apprenticeships in the 2018 to 2019 hybrid end year delivered:

- a. 50 retail apprenticeship frameworks with a QAR of 46% (23 achieved) and
- b. 50 engineering apprenticeship standards with a QAR of 80% (40 achieved).

The overall QAR would be 63% but the provider would fall below Minimum Standards because more than 40% of their cohort were on an apprenticeship with a QAR below the 62% threshold.

## Small or new apprenticeship provision

23. Where the underperforming provision exceeds the tolerance level but the cohort (we regard 'All age apprenticeships' as a cohort) is small and it is predominately new or immature provision that is below the Minimum Standards threshold, we will take this into account when deciding whether to take intervention action or what intervention action to take.

24. We expect a provider in this position to set quality improvement targets for the poor provision as a priority.

## Minimum Standards reports and additional conditions

25. We will supply Minimum Standards reports to providers for 19+ Education and Training for 2018 to 2019 data. **This will not be an automatic trigger upon which we will take action.** However, we have included this data in the wider QAR data sets to review performance where providers are under additional conditions from 2017 to 2018, and potentially lift these additional conditions. We expect providers to be evaluating their in-year education and training data and taking remedial action for themselves.

26. We will supply Minimum Standards reports for apprenticeship performance once we have final QAR data. We also expect providers to be evaluating their in-year apprenticeship data and taking remedial action for themselves.

27. Where providers were issued with additional conditions of funding / contract obligations in 2019 or prior to that, as a result of falling below Minimum Standards for 19+ education and training, these conditions will continue to apply as additional conditions / contract obligations to their contracts and grant funding agreements issued by us until such time as those conditions / contract obligations have been lifted. We expect these conditions to have been complied with by the end of those contracts / grant funding agreements or by the end of July 2020, whichever is the sooner.

28. If compliance has not been achieved, or if any provider funded by us gives concerns in respect of their educational performance, we will consider available data and information in the wider context of our revised approach to intervention and the provider's circumstances and consider the appropriate response.

29. Providers are reminded that poor or declining education performance data can lead to escalating intervention action and we will act early in the best interests of students, apprentices and the public purse.



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